

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 SNM-02 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAM-01 AID-20 IO-14 OMB-01 EB-11 CU-04 NIC-01

DRC-01 FEA-02 TRSE-00 CIEP-02 COME-00 INT-08 NEA-11

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R 011225Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 288

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

DIA

DEA HQS

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USSAG NKP

13TH ADVON UDORN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 1833

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, TH

SUBJ: POLITICAL ATMOSPHERICS IN THAILAND DURING JANUARY 1974

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUMMARY: THE CIA BOGUS LETTER ISSUE CROWNED THE MONTH FOR SUSTAINED PRESS, STUDENT, AND THAI PUBLIC ATTENTION. THE STUDENT PROTESTS SURROUNDING JAPANESE PRIME MINISTER TANAKA'S VISIT GAVE IT GOOD BUT BRIEF COMPETITION. THE SANYA GOVERNMENT FUMBLERD ITS PROPOSED LEGISLATION FOR CAR REGISTRATION FEES, AND THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (NLA) FIRST REJECTED BUT LATER PASSED THE BILL. CANDIDATES FOR PRIME MINISTER UNIFORMLY DENIED ANY DESIRE FOR THE POSITION. THE FOREIGN MINISTER EXPOUNDED ON THE DIRECTION OF THAI FOREIGN POLICY. THE INSURGENCY IN NORTHEAST THAILAND GOT MUCH PUBLICITY TOWARD THE END OF THE MONTH. THE SEARCH FOR OIL CONTINUED. NORTHROP CORPORATION BOWED OUT OF THE CONTROVERSIAL SECOND AIRPORT CONSTRUCTION SCHEME. INADEQUATE GOVERNMENT LAW ENFORCEMENT RESULTED IN STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS AND OTHER UNCONTROLLED DISTURBANCES. END SUMMARY.

1. THE EXPOSURE OF THE FALSE CIA LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE PRIME MINISTER CAUSED INDIGNATION FROM THE GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC, AND PROVIDED A SPRINGBOARD FOR PRESS CRITICISM AIMED AT PURPORTED U.S. INTERFERENCE IN THAILAND'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS. STUDENTS DEMONSTRATED AGAINST THE U.S. AMBASSADOR IN CHIANG MAI AND DEMANDED THAT HE GO HOME. FURTHER DEMONSTRATIONS OCCURRED IN UDORN AND KORAT (BANGKOK 0629). COMMENT: THE STRONG PRESS ATTACKS WERE ABATING AT MONTH-END, BUT CAN REVIVE QUICKLY SHOULD THE U.S. PRESENCE IN THAILAND CREATE ANY OTHER NEWSWORTHY STORIES. THIS SITUATION WILL CONTINUE TO SIMMER BENEATH THE SURFACE FOR THE FORSEEABLE FUTURE. ALTHOUGH SENIOR RTG OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN CONCERNED OVER THE ISSUE, THEY HAVE BEEN INTENT ON AVERTING ANY SERIOUS BREACH IN U.S.-THAI RELATIONS.

2. JAPANESE PRIME MINISTER TANAKA'S VISIT TO BANGKOK PROVED A CONSPICUOUS FAILURE FROM THE STANDPOINT OF JAPANESE/THAI RELATIONS, AND THE JAPANESE IMAGE AMONG THE THAI REMAINS TARNISHED. TANAKA'S RECEPTION BY AND CONFRONTATION WITH THE STUDENTS DID NOTHING TO IMPROVE THE UNEASY RELATIONSHIP. THE VISIT ENDED WITH A COLORLESS COMMUNIQUE, AND TANAKA'S DEPARTURE LEFT THAI ANTIPATHIES TOWARD JAPANESE TRADE PRACTICES INTACT, ESPECIALLY AMONG STUDENTS (BANGKOK 0638).

3. PRIME MINISTER SANYA THAMMASAK ABETTED RUMORS THAT HE MIGHT RESIGN BY VOLUNTEERING TO PRESS CRITICS THAT HE WOULD GLADLY DO SO IF THAT

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IS WHAT EVERYONE WANTED. THE INITIAL NLA REJECTION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S CLUMSY ACTION IN ATTEMPTING TO FORCE THROUGH A TAX BILL ON CAR REGISTRATION FEES (BANGKOK 1417) HEIGHTENED RESIGNATION RUMORS, AS DID SANYA'S SUDDEN TRIP TO SEE THE KING AT THE CHIANG MAI WINTER PALACE. WE NEVERTHE LESS ESTIMATE THAT SANYA WILL CONTINUE AS HEAD OF THE CARETAKER GOVERNMENT UNTIL THE CONSTITUTION HAS BEEN PROMULGATED AND A NEW GOVERNMENT IS FORMED FOLLOWING NATIONAL ELECTIONS. THE CONSTITUTION DRAFTING COMMITTEE (CDC) IS PRESENTING THE NEW CON-

STITUTION TO THE CABINET DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF FEBRUARY, AND THE
NLA WILL THEREAFTER CONSIDER IT.

4. TWO PROSPECTIVE PRIME MINISTERS FOR THE NEW GOVERNMENT EXPECTED
TO BE FORMED FOLLOWING ELECTIONS HAVE DISCLAIMED ANY INTEREST IN
THE POSITION. DR. PUEY UNGPHAKORN, WHO HAS JUST RETURNED FROM SELF-
IMPOSED EXILE IN ENGLAND, AND KUKRIT PRAMOJ HAVE SAID THEY DID NOT
WANT THE JOB. NEVERTHELESS, THEY ARE TESTING THE POLITICAL WINDS
AND ASSESSING THEIR PROSPECTS OF FINDING A POLITICAL BASE. THE FIELD
OF POSSIBLE CANDIDATES (BANGKOK 969) IS CURRENTLY SMALL, BUT MAY
INCREASE AS THE ELECTIONS DRAW NEAR AND ISSUES BECOME SHARPER.

5. FOREIGN MINISTER CHARUNPHAN ISSARANGKUN NA AYUTTHAYA PRESENTED
A GENERAL FOREIGN POLICY STATEMENT IN MID-JANUARY EXTENDING A HAND
TO ALL NATIONS WHO WISH TO BE FRIENDLY, INCLUDING THE PRC AND THE
SOVIET UNION (BANGKOK 948). CHARUNPHAN EXPLAINED THAT THIA-UMS.
RELATIONS WOULD CONTINUE TO BE CLOSE BUT WOULD BE MODIFIED AND
ADOPTED TO CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES WITH LESS EMPHASIS ON MILITARY
AFFAIRS. HE RESTATED THAILAND'S WHOLE-HEARTED SUPPORT FOR EFFEC-
TIVE REGIONAL COOPERATION TO PROMOTE THE PEACE, STABILITY AND WEL-
FARE OF THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN REGION. THE EMBASSY FINDS LITTLE DIS-
PARITY BETWEEN THE THAI AND U.S. VIEWS OF WHAT WE MUTUALLY HOPE
MIGHT BE ACHIEVED IN SOUTHEAST ASIA ALTHOUGH OUR ROUTES IN
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